

Case study: Christchurch

1.1 Background

When students at Hornby High School undertook a project to develop a landscape plan for their local park in 2006, they decided it would also be good to make the park smokefree. This set off chain of events that eventually led to a Smokefree Outdoor Public Places Policy making all playgrounds, reserves, sport parks and Council events, smokefree. So far, Christchurch is the largest city in New Zealand to approve such a policy.



1.2 Approach to Council

Community and Public Health (CPH) (a Division of the Canterbury District Health Board) was working on a local landscape project with Hornby High School, and approached Smokefree Canterbury (a collection of agencies meeting regularly to reduce the impact of smoking on the community), who took on the role of project leader. Funding was obtained from the Partnership Health Primary Health Organisation (PHO) to scope a trial of four smokefree playgrounds within three Hornby parks.

Smokefree Canterbury began advocating to the local Community Board and soon secured its support. Central to this support was the lead taken by students from Hornby High School who helped to make the issue relevant to youth.

A formal project plan and steering group was developed by the Cancer Society and CPH on behalf of Smokefree Canterbury. A presentation on smokefree playgrounds was delivered to the Council which unanimously agreed the trial should be run.

1.3 Trial implementation

The three-month trial was implemented throughout May to July 2008. The launch of the trial was planned around World Smokefree Day (31 May) and a community event was held at one of the parks.

1.3.1 Budget

The PHO allocated a budget for the trial phase. This was spent on signage, communications and promotional materials.

1.3.2 Promotion

A professional events and communications company was hired to organise the trial launch event. Extensive promotion was undertaken including media releases, flyers and a YouTube competition for local schools. Smokefree signage was placed at each of the trial playgrounds.

A flyer was produced and distributed around community residences prior to the launch. A second flyer was distributed at a Health Day, run at the end of the trial, informing residents of how the trial would support the introduction of a policy for smokefree playgrounds.

1.3.3 Media coverage

The launch received media coverage in local papers and on both local and national television. The Hornby High School students became spokespeople for the event and were heavily involved with the publicity. A six minute slot of positive coverage was secured on *Campbell Live* (a national daily current affairs television programme).

The key message promoted via the media was that smokefree playgrounds are about de-normalising smoking rather than banning it. Great care was taken to stress the need not mention “a ban” in any media.

1.4 Policy formation

During the trial, Smokefree Canterbury conducted a survey of 150 people from the community to gauge attitudes towards smokefree playgrounds and parks. Results showed there was strong community support, with 93 percent finding smokefree playgrounds acceptable and 75 percent finding smokefree parks acceptable. Even smokers found the idea acceptable. The rationale behind smokefree parks and playgrounds was also well understood.



These results were taken to Christchurch City Council in November 2008, which approved the idea of a smokefree policy. Smokefree Canterbury, in partnership with

the Council, undertook extensive consultation with stakeholders, council staff, elected members and the community on developing a document outlining policy options.

This involved a telephone survey of 400 people and a stakeholder's workshop to work through options. A similar workshop was held for elected council members.

Again, consultation suggested a high degree of support for smokefree outdoor areas. On that basis it was recommended Council pass a smokefree policy covering green spaces and council-owned events with a view that the policy be progressive and extendable into other public areas.

In June 2009 Christchurch City Council introduced a policy to make all parks and reserves (including playgrounds and sports parks) as well as council-owned events in Christchurch and the Banks Peninsula smokefree.

1.5 Evaluation

The project by Smokefree Canterbury in partnership with Christchurch City Council is considered a success to date. The policy will be evaluated over two years to see if there is increased understanding in the community and to assess any evidence of smokefree behavioural change.

As the policy is not enforceable, the main focus is now to create understanding in the community. The two Hornby High School students have become members of Smokefree Canterbury and are helping to promote the message that smokefree outdoor areas provide great role modelling for young people.

1.5.1 What worked well

The collaborative work of the Smokefree Canterbury members with Christchurch City Council was a major factor in effectively carrying out both advocacy and trial preparation. A detailed and comprehensive communications and public relations plan was also hugely successful in terms of promoting smokefree playgrounds and publicising key messages. The identification of key champions within Council was also crucial.

The policy itself is progressive, allowing for its scope to be re-evaluated at some further time. This may mean it can be extended to other outdoor spaces, providing there is sufficient public and stakeholder support.

1.5.2 What could have worked better?

At the outset of the project, Smokefree Canterbury approached Council staff who were not able to make the necessary decisions. The initial stages of the project

would have been more effective if how Council worked had been thoroughly explored first.

Project leaders believe the trial would have been better undertaken over summer rather than winter. This would have made it easier to promote as the playgrounds are used more over the summer period.

1.6 Suggestions

The following suggestions came from key members of the Smokefree Canterbury team:

- Be clear about what you want to achieve and who's going to be involved. Get all necessary parties round the table for a collaborative effort – the message is stronger when it comes from the 'sum of the parts'.
- Seeking financial support for media and public relations is very important.
- Find a council 'champion' who can open doors for you.
- Keep people informed – a good communications plan is essential.
- Thorough consultation with the community and stakeholders will point you in the best strategic direction to go with a smokefree policy.
- Establish a project group or steering group to keep you on track and to get new ideas.
- Take time to understand council processes – this will help explain to others the steps required
- Look at the case for smokefree outdoor areas from a council's perspective, i.e. how might they support council plans and strategies?
- Consider carefully what your project is trying to achieve and how you can best evaluate "success".